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THE GUARDIAN CAT.

I HAVE grown tired of photography, partly because my fingers were continually black, partly because people who meant to praise me always said that my results were very good for the work of an amateur; but some years ago I was wild about it. My mania was to photograph bits of scenery and ruins which had never been focused before, and in seeking to indulge it, I was perpetually getting away into corners. The cornerest corner I ever explored in these rambles was in the west of England. The wildest parts of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales have a tourist taint about them; slimy touts and ciceroni have crawled over their surface with snail-like perseverance and stolidity, and left traces. But no one has ever written a hand-book of Dowd; no one would buy it if he did. Dowd has no scenery in particular, no waterfall, no antiquities of historical or philosophical interest. There was a ruin indeed, but commonplace impecuniosity, not romantic war nor mysterious haunting, had caused its decay, and, what was more, a fellow lived in it; not a smuggler nor coiner either, but the rightful owner.

I should not have found that out, if it had not been for a thunder-storm. I was hard at work with my apparatus and imagination—'Ruin near Dowd; West Front;' 'Ruin near Dowd, supposed remains of Keep,' &c.—when the sky became so black, that you would have thought it was going to rain ink, and the first electric gun was fired. Now, Dowd, a village consisting of a farm, a few labourers' cottages, a forge, and a small beer-shop, *not* licensed to sell spirits, was quite four miles off. I had my knapsack, and some bread and cheese with me, so it was perfectly indifferent where I passed the day or the night, so long as I got shelter. Part of the roof seemed to be in good enough repair; so I struck my camera and little tent at once, and commenced an exploration of the interior, as the first drops began to make their half-crown-sized splashes. After penetrating the dilapidated outer walls, I ought to have seen that the kernel of the place was in a more habitable

condition, for there had been an attempt at cultivating vegetables in an inner garden, and the framework of certain windows was glazed. But I was so eager to get my apparatus under shelter before the rain came on in earnest, that I noticed nothing of this, and so it happened that I blundered into a furnished apartment. Not that the furniture was extensive, but there was enough to swear by: a deal-table, three cherry-wood chairs, and a portrait of a gentleman, in oils, about totaled it. A man was sitting at the deal-table when I entered. He jumped up at the intrusion, and I saw that he was tall, young, thin, and dressed in a suit of shepherd's plaid considerably the worse for wear.

'I beg your pardon,' stammered I. 'I ran in out of the thunder-storm, not knowing that the house was inhabited.'

'You thought that a bat, or, at best, an owl, would be the only tenant of so tumble-down a place,' he said, smiling somewhat bitterly at my questionable apology; 'but come in. I have nothing besides shelter to offer you, I fear; but to that you are welcome.'

'A thousand thanks,' said I. 'I would not intrude on you, if it were not that I have been taking some large photographs, and do not wish them to be spoiled. Not that I am sorry to keep my skin out of such a deluge as this!'

For the storm had now burst with great fury. Flashes of lightning averaged about three to the minute; the thunder was rather a succession of explosions, than the normal roll; and the rain came down, as if all the gargoyles of Europe were having an international spouting-match overhead.

I deposited my traps in a corner, and immediately became aware of a third personage, hitherto unnoticed. This was a very large black cat, who emerged from under the table, stretched himself, and, without taking the slightest notice of myself, proceeded to examine my luggage with great interest. Do not tell me that he had no reason. The way he peered about, gently lifting up cloths, and letting them down again, alone proved the contrary. That he perfectly mastered the uses of the camera, I am not prepared to avow, but he

satisfied himself that there was no great mischief to be apprehended; for presently he came in to his master's side, gave him a rub on the knee, and then began to groom himself with his tongue.

'Poor old *Dabble*,' said his master, scratching his head with a fore-finger; and the animal, instead of purring, like another cat, gave a little murmured 'Yow, yow!' as evident an attempt to speak as possible.

'*Dabble*. Polite for *diable*?' I inquired.

'Yes. He is my familiar, and, with one exception, my only friend and companion. Are you not, *Dabble*?'

'Yow, yow!'

'Is he old?'

'Very. Fifteen years, I should say.'

I do not think that I am very curious about other people's private affairs as a general rule, but I certainly confess to having felt that impertinent passion in the present instance. Who was this young man, whose manners, phraseology, and accent bespoke him an educated gentleman; and why did he live in a ruin alone with a black cat double the size and intelligence of other black cats? Well, he didn't, quite. There was a witch connected with the establishment, and presently she came in. Her hooked nose, curved chin, and general appearance might fairly have burned her, were faith not cold, without collateral evidence; but she carried her broom in her hand, and the black cat ran to her, rubbed against her old legs, sat up and plunged his claws again and again into her dress with ecstatic grasps. Damnatory signs against the whole family: 'Tortures for three!' the order peremptorily demanded by the fitness of things, Mr Toole. Yet she was a poor, degenerate, harmless witch; perhaps a lapsed witch, who had been baptised, for she was afraid of the thunder, and shook like a screw-steamer in a gale whenever a fresh clap came. She had taken refuge in a vault which was once a cellar, and had been flooded out. The sight of me frightened her almost as much as the thunder and the water.

'We are not used to visitors,' said the young man with a smile of explanation. 'This gentleman has come in for shelter, Molly. Have we anything to offer him besides dry bread and hard cider?'

'*Dabble* brought in a rabbit early this morning, Master Walter,' mumbled the old woman.

'Good *Dabble*!' and he patted the cat's head.

'Well, cook the rabbit for us, please, Molly.'

There were some smouldering wood-embers on the large hearth, which the old woman raked together and blew up into a flame; and then adding fresh fuel, she disappeared to skin the *Dabble*-captured bunny, which was in due time boiled and set before us. Our table-cloth, though very coarse, was clean, and the same might be said of the iron forks. I added the bread and cheese from my knapsack to the common stock. My host took the head of his table with the air of a Belgravian entertainer; *Dabble* stood at his side on his hind-legs, with his fore-paws and black head appearing over the edge of the board till he received a suitable morsel, when he went down and despatched it on the floor, reappearing when it was finished. If his master proved dilatory, he put out a paw sideways, and dabbled his arm, at the same time uttering a plaintive meow.

When we three had finished our meal, we left

the table, and the harmless witch sat down and had her dinner before clearing away. Of course I had been abstemious. One rabbit amongst four is not a gorge; try it.

I have gone into these details of my first meeting with Walter Musgrave in his ruin, because they made a great impression upon me. I should not have been surprised to find a poor but proud Don placed in a corresponding position in some corner of Spain; or even in Ireland, the situation would not have seemed abnormal. But that an English gentleman, so reduced, and having good health, should not have emigrated, or enlisted, or driven a cab, supposing no one would give him ninety pounds a year as a clerk, was an unintelligible muddle to me.

But an impatient reader will decline to take any interest in such reflections, so I will simply state, without explanation, that my host and I grew very friendly before we parted that night; that I walked over from Dowd again next day, and persuaded him to go back with me and eat a return dinner; that I became very intimate with him, and prolonged my stay in the neighbourhood in consequence; and that he told me his history.

It was a story of a lawsuit. For three generations the Musgraves had been throwing away substance in their race after a shadow, until the family and its acres had dwindled down to this one member, the old ruinous mansion, and a few roods of grass-land about it. Lawyers had devoured the rest. Honest lawyers, look you; for the shadow appeared very tangible, and I believe that the cleverest of them had a *bond fide* confidence in pulling his client safe through.

The bone of contention was freehold ground in a thriving city; a very nice bone, with plenty of meat upon it. The Musgraves could not make their title clear; neither could the Contremusgraves make their title clear, and so the property remained unproductive. The houses could not be let, or pulled down, or patched up. The Musgrave claim was admitted to be very strong, but one link in the chain was wanting: a certain deed which was known to exist, but could not be found anywhere. The provoking part of the matter was that it had been discovered once, by the present claimant's grandfather, but at that time other necessary legal evidence, since collected, had not been got together, and the old man, who was queer from the effects of hope deferred, combined with that of a pistol-wound in the head he had received in a duel arising out of the suit, had stowed the important document away in a safe so carefully, that no one had since been able to find it; for he was struck down by a fit, and died without having the power to communicate the hiding-place to his only son, who was hurriedly summoned to his dying bed. A minute description of the document, together with an account of how he obtained it, was found in his will; and in the next legal tussle, this was put in with some confidence that, combined with the rest of the case, it would be accepted as evidence. But after a deal of learned argument, and some hesitation, the authorities who had to decide the matter declined to take the will for the deed, and the case was kept for the benefit of a fresh set of lawyers, at that time not out of their dinners and articles. Thus the Musgrave property remained bleeding. My friend's father got pretty well the last drop out of it, and then married, not

for love, but partly in hopes of an heir to carry on the suit, partly because the lady had a little money to be sucked into the Chancery quicksands. He did get an heir; he did sink the money. Fortunately for her, the wife died before it was quite spent.

The goodly Musgrave estates were now all gone, as has been said, the house and homestead being alone retained. This last bit of strand was stuck to tenaciously, because it was pretty certain that the iron safe, with the coveted parchment inside it, was somewhere about the premises. But where? It is needless to say that it had been well hunted for, experienced detectives having been employed in the search; and, indeed, the ruinous state of the house was in no small measure owing to the ruthless manner in which some of these investigations had been conducted.

Happily, not quite all the money of Walter Musgrave's mother went to the lawyers; some of it was spent in educating him in a manner befitting the position he would hold when the lawsuit was over, and the valuable house-property at his disposal. But his father died, and the funds gave out before he had finished his intended course, and he found himself in the queer, tantalising, poverty-stricken, brain-destroying condition in which I discovered him when photography and a thunderstorm brought us together.

When he first commenced his confidences, I was beyond expression dismayed. 'O my prophetic soul, his great-grandfather!' I mentally exclaimed, when he opened with a short biography of that ancestor. But by degrees I grew interested; his account was clear enough, if mine is not, and he had confirmatory documents to shew for everything he advanced. At last, I was unable to conceive how it was possible to keep him out of what seemed so undoubtedly his own; but then I am not a lawyer.

Nevertheless, as soon as we were intimate enough for such a liberty, I talked reason to him, urging him to throw the losing game up, leave the ruin to the care of Molly and *Dabble*, and look about for some method of earning bread and bacon; for even as an unskilled artisan he would live better than he did at present.

He let his remaining patch of grass-land for forty pounds a year; he got about ten pounds for the apples in his orchard, and half as much more for the hay which was cut in it. *Dabble*, who was an arrant, but not a self-seeking poacher, occasionally brought in a rabbit or a leveret, and that was what the last of the Musgraves lived on.

He owned that it savoured of lunacy to go on like that; that his best course would be to sell what little homestead remained to him, which he could do at a fancy price, as his retaining possession of it destroyed the compactness of the remainder of the estate, and make a fresh start in the world, but said that he simply could not do it.

'Surely you could make one vigorous effort,' said I.

'Of course I could,' he replied, 'if that were all; but after it was made—a week after, or a month, or a year, or five years after—I should be drawn back into this inherited struggle, and if I then had to bear the reflection that I had thrown away a chance, I feel certain that a sentiment of remorseful regret would drive me mad. No, you might just as well tell Laocoon to make an effort and

wrench himself free of the serpent-folds; if he could, they would twine round him again when he was weary.'

So I never annoyed him with common-sense again, and indeed, after a little while, I caught the Chancery infection myself. Of course, it was but in a mild form, as I had no property of my own at stake, but I had it sufficiently to alter my ideas entirely, and sympathise with the persistent struggle with fate in which my new friend was engaged. To tell the truth, I was in an unhealthy state of mind at that time, having been recently jilted, a misfortune which, till they grow accustomed to it, often makes young men sulky with the world in general. My sulks took the form of isolation tempered by photography; and residence at Dowd, with a man bound to go crazy, a witch, and an uncanny black cat for my sole acquaintances, exactly suited me just then. There is a freemasonry amongst the forlorn in love which enables them to recognise one another, and I soon learned that Musgrave had met a certain Mary, the daughter of a poor clergyman who had acted as his private tutor, and that he had indulged in day-dreams of taking his degree, going into orders, and leading a life of married bliss in a parsonage on a hundred a year; but he had to leave the university abruptly when his father died and left him the dormant lawsuit, and nothing else. Then at first he was sanguine of being able shortly to offer his Mary a better home than they had modestly pictured for themselves; but after awhile, when he had well studied the story of the family failures, his love was but another wedge in the torture-boot.

I consoled him with the reflection that his case was far better than mine; his girl was faithful to him, or at least he thought so, and he had a chance; whereas, I knew for certain that the heart of mine was a mere pop-gun, and that I had been shot out of it as another fellow popped in. But he did not pity me properly, for he considered that I was lucky in that she had changed her mind before marriage instead of after, and I could not contradict that.

But the cup of Musgrave's misfortunes was not yet full. *Dabble* died.

Do you laugh at people who grieve for pet animals? I don't. 'Only a dog!' folks say. Well, a dog who loves me is better worth my regret than a continent full of men and women who don't. Still more absurdly, argument is sometimes attempted, and we are told not to give a second thought to the loss of an animal 'that has no soul.' Now, surely, if the death of dog, cat, or horse meant its utter annihilation, that is an extra cause for sorrow. But there is no reason for such a notion. Read Butler's *Analogy*, and never speak with that ignorant confidence again. I do not refer you to Plato, a heathen Greek, but to Bishop Butler, as orthodox a man as yourself—perhaps more so.

Well, whatever may be the spiritual endowment of other animals, *Dabble* must have had a soul; at least, he reasoned, and certainly would have talked, if the formation of his mouth had permitted him. Do you mean to tell me that a mere breathing-machine would have found out that his master wanted rabbits, without being told, and so brought them home when he caught them, instead of eating them quietly in the woods?

He took no medicine, he had no doctor, and yet

he died, poor dear, which looks as if the medical profession was slandered sometimes. His illness was short. He did not eat one morning; the next, his coat was rough, and he did not lick it; on the third, he went about mewing, and his eyes got filmy; on the fourth, he had convulsions, in the course of one of which he succumbed.

We made a wooden box for him, and determined to bury him in the orchard, under his favourite tree, where he used to scratch holes, and lie in wait for dickey-birds. It was on a lovely autumn evening that we bore the box to this spot, and commenced our sad preparations. Musgrave being chief-mourner, I took the part of sexton, and struck the spade into the ground. For a little while, the task was easy; then I came on roots, which delayed me. Hacking through them, however, I dug a grave some three feet deep, and we tried to carry the obsequies a stage farther; but the box stuck: the grave was not wide enough. I began again at the sides, and soon widened it; but then it looked too shallow, and I dug down a little deeper—not much, for I was stopped by something harder than a root; a big stone, probably. It was impossible to make any impression on it; so, as one does not like to be beaten, I dug round it, and tried to get it up bodily. Musgrave had to help, and then we disinterred a square iron box.

'By Jove!' cried I, 'I wonder if it is the safe hidden away by your grandfather!'

Musgrave flushed very red, and then turned deadly pale.

'Bound to be,' said he; 'and the deed is in it.'

In spite of the suspense, he put the safe on one side until we had lowered *Dabble* into its place, which he exactly fitted, and filled in the grave. Then we took our discovery home, and wrenched the lid off. There was the parchment safe enough, considerably discoloured, but quite legible.

Well, Musgrave had no other way of raising money for the reopening of the big suit, so he sold the ruin and the orchard. The case was clear enough, now the missing link was supplied; and he established his claim to the property which had been so long in dispute without much trouble or delay. He married his Mary, did not cut me when the increasing value of his freeholds made him very rich, and was always grateful to *Dabble*, who had brought him rabbits when living, and a fortune when dead.

OLD HATS.

THOSE grand pictorial works of history, the frescoes of Egypt and Assyria, supply us with a sort of fossil fashion-book of the dead past. There, on red granite and baked clay, on gray limestone and black basalt, stands limned in imperishable colours the long array of slaves, and captives, and auxiliaries that graced the triumphal procession of some conquering king. A great variety of physical types and of national costumes have thus been preserved from oblivion, and amid other head-gear, there here and there crops up what may fairly be dubbed a hat. More often, however, at Nineveh than at Memphis or Luxor. The mighty Mesopotamian empires were indeed brought into closer contact with hat-wearing races than was the case with Pharaoh and his subjects. The Scythian foes of the Great Queen wore hats; so did the Parthian light horse who served beneath her standard. Pagan

Armenians had hats closely resembling those still worn by their Christian descendants, and these were chiefly of thick felt or of varnished cloth, while the only Egyptian representative of this style of head-dress was the shapeless structure of coarse straw that crowned the head of the Coptic husbandman. That the Jews wore hats, at anyrate during and after the Captivity, is tolerably certain. The English translators were accurate on this point. Those were hats, not caps, which were bound down over the brows of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, before they were cast into the 'burning fiery furnace,' filled with the fuel peculiar to that timberless land—the cut grass of the weedy plain. The helmeted legionaries of Rome fought against Zealots in hats, and when Jerusalem fell, and every market was glutted with Jewish slaves, the scattered Hebrews familiarised the provincial populations of the empire with the sight of a covering for the head that must to most of them have been strange indeed. Greece has never taken kindly to the hat. Still less was old Hellas willing to adopt one of the most distinctive badges of her hereditary enemies. That the Mede wore a hat would of itself have been a reason for hating such an article of attire. The old Persian Sun-worshippers wore hats when they followed Xerxes or marched with Choosroes, as their humble offspring the Parsees of India still do. Most members of the huge Mongolian family have preferred this style of head-gear to anything more soft or supple. The literary aristocracy of China have deserted it for the mandarin cap, but the coolie's shaven head is still protected by a crown and brim of thickly plaited rice-straw. Tartars, whether Buddhist or Mohammedan, hold fast to the hat. It was with stiff cylinders on their heads that the Turks, Seljukian and Ottoman alike, first poured over the frontier of the helpless Byzantine empire.

The turban, which to most of us seems so distinctively the mark of the Moslem, is not by any means universally adopted by followers of the Prophet. It is not only that Mussulman heretics, like the Shiites of Persia, adhere to their high caps of black lambskin. Nobody ever impugned the orthodoxy of the finder of the rusty sword of the victor of Bajazet, the terrible Timur-Lenk. Yet the Scourge of Asia wore a hat as he told his beads and concerted his conquests and his massacres. The crafty conqueror of Constantinople, Mahomet II. himself, unconsciously sat for his portrait to some draughtsman among those convenient Genoese merchants who helped him to capture the capital of Eastern Christendom, and he has come down to us in an absurdly tall white hat, such as those professionally holy men, the dervishes, now wear. There are in the Tell of Algeria native chiefs, entitled to the prefix of Cid or Sidi, and whose lives are rigidly shaped on Koran precepts, yet who wear on all occasions of ceremony weighty hats with brims of impossible breadth. Among Asiatics who do not turn their faces to Mecca when they pray, there are the Japanese, who build hats for civilian wear, like most other things, of paper, and the Philippine and Molucca islanders, whom the Spaniards found thatched with cone-shaped head-coverings of reeds and straw, such as they still affect.

During the dark, and indeed, if the phrase may be used, even the twilight ages, hats were suppressed throughout Europe. The cap, the coil, the

hood, lorded it everywhere. No one wore a hat except the poor Jew, at the sight of whose detested gabardine and the yellow cylinder which, as per act of parliament, he slunk abroad in, the boys set up a hoot of scornful opprobrium. The revival of learning was also the revival of hats. Indeed, just as some scholarship and some art-knowledge existed before Francis I. of France kindly took Minerva and the Muses under his splendid patronage, so had hats begun to assert themselves before the first French soldier found a grave in Italy. It was a hat around which Louis XI. wore those tiny leaden effigies of saints whom he was apt to invoke before murdering or robbing somebody as a matter of state policy. Germany favoured absurd little hats that could not easily be balanced on the head they were supposed to shelter. The Low Countries had elected a more comfortable breadth of brim. English 'men of worship' had assumed a hat, frequently with an iron lining, as a proper precaution in the days of handblows and the Wars of the Roses. And presently the hat reigned supreme, sending down the deposed cap to take a subordinate place in the world's esteem, and abolishing the hood altogether.

Among the hats of the later middle ages, two stand conspicuously forth. The cardinal's red was known everywhere within the compass of a legate's journeyings, or a nuncio's jurisdiction. The hat of state of the archducal House of Austria had merely a local interest; but then it was as dear to Austrians as the Iron Crown to Lombardy, or the diadem of Stephen to the Hungarians. With them, the head of the Hapsburgs—Emperor of the Romans and King of the Germans as he might have been proclaimed at Worms—was simply Archduke—their own Archduke. He did not wear a crown when he appeared as their ruler; he wore a hat. And that glorified hat, to this very hour, is carefully guarded and jealously locked up in the innermost chamber of a town-hall as strong as a fortress; and the nine keys of the chest that holds the treasure are intrusted to nine councillors, who may never, without prodigious fuss, publicity, and ceremony, extract the sacred beaver from its honourable durance. The hat which Geissler, Austrian bailiff in a Swiss valley, is fabled to have set upon a pole to receive homage from the sturdy dalesmen, and which drew forth for us the pretty story of Tell and the apple, must surely have been a pale reflex of the tremendous hat of Geissler's archducal master.

The steeple-crowned hat of Queen Elizabeth's time really has a weird look. It has come, as an article of feminine attire, to be attributed to witches. The witch of the earlier half of the seventeenth century might as well have equipped herself to ride to some midnight festival without her broomstick and black cat, as without one of the pointed hats which had been in high fashion when the Armada threatened our shores. Yet these hats lingered in use among rustic females long after the court had discarded and the poets ridiculed them. We see in the vignettes of Izaak Walton's *Angler*—executed in the reign of James II.—the deathless milkmaid and her quaint mother in these portentous hats, with long and broad strings hanging down. Queen Anne beheld, not only as the scholastic rhymist declared—

Newton high enthroned
Amongst the heavenly host;

but also, what was perhaps more interesting to the Girl of the Period, the advent of hats for ladies' wear, not very dissimilar to the 'Dolly Varden' hat of our own day, and which held their ground pretty firmly through the century, until they were extinguished by the gigantic bonnets that were worn when George III. was struggling against the obtrusive Corsican, and Queen Charlotte as yet but a middle-aged princess.

Steeple hats, as regarded masculine wear, came to be a badge of faction. The men of buff and iron, they of the falling bands and sad-coloured raiment, and terrible trenchant rapiers, wore them in battle and in council. The members of that High Court of Justice that doomed the king to block and axe—Bradshaw and Ludlow, and the other irregular judges—thrust down their steeple hats more firmly over their frowning brows as one by one they signed the sentence of death. On the other hand, the cavaliers, who rode after Rupert, and who scoffed at the stiff ugliness of Puritan attire, wore a hat perhaps prettier and more picturesque than any that has been invented since that day. Moderate as to crown and brim, elegant of shape, and gaily set off by its dancing plume of white ostrich feathers, it surpassed the Spanish beaver of Charles II.'s reign, and was far superior to the flat-topped hat which had suited the round face of bluff King Harry, and which is now considered the natural appanage of Her Majesty's beef-eaters. The three-cornered hat, of which Louis XIV. was the great patron, enjoyed a long popularity, although it underwent, in the course of a hundred years or so, as many changes as the renowned knife of that sentimental sailor who, after having the instrument thrice rebladed, and once fitted with a new handle, regarded it as a 'keepsake' still. The fierce little hat of Marlborough's days, with its Ramillies cock, its broad lace, and the dainty snow-white edging of tiny, downy feathers, was not by any means twin-brother to the ungainly head-gear which, in times not very remote, the naval veterans of Greenwich Hospital put on as part of their uniform; and this, again, differed much from the 'opera hat' of our great-grandfathers, the chapeau bras of the French; a slim contrivance that was made to be worn under the arm rather than on the head, and which never seemed quite in its right place when it was perched on the frizzled and powdered locks of its owner.

Hats, by the first year of the seventeenth century, had begun to moulder, so far as their feathers were concerned, but they were decorated with cockades of the national or dynastic colour, and above all, they were handsomely bound with gold or silver. We have come, with the change of manners and opinions, inevitable after a lapse of time, to think lightly of these ornaments. We smile as young Buttons, the surgeon's page and bottle-boy, goes by with his oil-cloth-covered basketful of pink draughts, and a glittering band of gold around his shiny hat; but even lynx-eyed Swift saw nothing ridiculous in the richly laced beavers worn by the gentlemen whom he daily met, and Johnson could not easily have been made to understand how soon such finery would be relegated to footmen. The tall hats of the French revolutionary epoch, the astonishing things which the Merveilleux and Incroyables, the dandies and wits of the Parisian party of progress, clapped upon

their heads as the monarchy tottered to its fall, were probably meant as a protest against the lank three-cornered head-gear, which withered old viscounts and fresh-complexioned cadets of Breton houses persisted in retaining as they hung about the Tuileries and sneered at the popular ferment. Perhaps it was in a similar spirit of defiance to subversive Gaul that our own grandfathers put on the hideous hat that is still, throughout the continent, more or less associated with the idea of an Englishman. That low-crowned, uncompromising broadbrim of the coaching-days, was supposed to be somehow mixed up with high taxes cheerfully borne, high prices willingly paid, and the general maintenance of our glorious constitution against home renovators and foreign foes. We see it in mildewed caricatures, usually in company with a many-caped greatcoat, flapped pockets, a stout stick, and a bull-dog; the whole being the acknowledged presentment of that sturdy John who was once esteemed rather as a model to ingenuous youth than in any merely ludicrous point of view.

The bell-crowned successor of the flat old favourite of the public never attained to the same rank in popular regard. It was a rakish hat from the beginning, associated in men's minds with punch, pugilism, and the wild Mohock pranks to which the roystering bucks and bloods of the later Georgian era were peculiarly prone. It suggested not merely the turf and the road, the tavern and the prize-ring, but also debts, gambling, wrenching off of knockers, thrashing of watchmen, painting house-fronts of a staring red and pea-green, and all the practical joking of Corinthian Tom and his high-spirited comrades. It was replaced by a more domestic-looking beaver; and from that time to this, the chimney-pot cylinder, though subject to some variations as to height and breadth, has only been notable in so far as silk has utterly superseded the costly fur of the North American rodent. Some mention is deserved by the so-called Leghorn hats, delicately braided by deft fingers out of selected straw, among the pleasant vales of Tuscany; by the yet daintier sun-shades of Panama, for which French customers are willing to give what to us appears a preposterous price; by the cabbage-palm hats of Australia, the Talipot hats of Ceylon, the pith hats worn as a protection against sun-stroke both in India and China. The Burmese hatter knows no material handier for his purpose than split bamboo, while the water-proof hats of seamen probably earned for them their seventeenth century nickname of 'tarpaulins.'

So long as it will hold together, a hat, be it never so battered and shapeless, retains a certain value in the eyes of the experienced rag-picker. Those Jewish perambulating merchants, whose melancholy monotone of 'Old clo' is as familiar to the inhabitants of London as is the sight of the chiffonier's hook and bag to the denizens of Paris, will seldom refuse to invest their copper capital in hats. Those ill-treated cylinders, crushed, frayed, and dim, are carried off to be rejuvenated, in frowsy back-shops, by dark-eyed Miriams and hook-nosed Josephs. It is wonderful to mark the transformation which the cunning touch of these manipulators can effect; or how their glue and brown paper, their peach-black and dyed rabbit's fur, can stiffen and smarten the mangiest old chimney-pot into the semblance of its glossy prime. An old hat, refreshed at this perennial

Fountain of Youth, is really a very creditable work of art. No Old Master, worm-eaten and chocolate-hued, disinterred from a garret in Ghent, and furnished for sale to millionaire purchasers in England, could be touched up with lighter hand or more trembling care. There it is at last—brighter than new, sleek, trim, oily, the sprucest, if not the most durable of hats. A thing of beauty it is, but not for long destined to be a joy to its sanguine purchaser.

Among the things which they manage best in France are certainly old hats. French Nathan, for some mysterious reason, is deeper than his brother, Nathan of Petticoat Lane, in the secrets of the elixir which turns old clothes into new. M. Nathan is no conjurer. He never tries the proverbially difficult experiment of placing young heads on old shoulders. But how many, many times has he succeeded in putting old hats on young heads! That French Israelite is a real artist. His womankind serve him well, making it a labour of love to replace the lost nap, and handling the bare edges as gingerly as if the felt or pasteboard below were nitro-glycerine ready to explode under rough usage. Nathan's refreshed hats are not dear. At the world-famous *Marché du Temple*, an old hat, styled, in the technical jargon of the market, a '*molle retapée*,' was quoted, on an average, at three francs. Eight sous represents the rag-picker's charge; the rest is for labour, embellishments, and a fair profit. At half-a-crown, the pretty, brilliant thing—a very Faust of a hat, made beautiful by some ringleted Mephistopheles in an *entresol*—seems cheap. It bears fine weather well, and may figure creditably on the Boulevards for three consecutive Sundays. But at the first downpour of rain, glue and gum and paint, silk and brown paper, resolve into their original constituents, and the whole fabric collapses like a dissolving view.

A WOMAN'S VENGEANCE.

CHAPTER XXIX.—BRIGNON.

If Alice Renn had been the sort of girl Helen took her for, or endeavoured to convince herself she was, it is probable that she would now have had good cause for jealousy. The two things that conduce to a man's unfaithfulness, in about equal proportions, are dislike of his wife, and liking for another woman; and Arthur, who had been hitherto influenced by the latter feeling only, was now urged by both. It is true he did not dislike Helen to the extent of aversion, and far less did he wish her harm. But his love for her, now pity had ceased, was gone, and, what is worse in such cases, much of his respect had gone with it. He had no suspicion that she had permitted Allardye to speak to her such words as he *had* spoken, but his confidence in her was shaken to its foundation. If he had ever given her his real affections, they returned to him now, perhaps to be bestowed elsewhere, if there had been a chance of their acceptance. But he well knew there was none. Jenny never spoke with him, never looked at him again, after that fatal meeting in the chalk-pit. But he did not burn his old love-letters, as he had once intended to do, and he hung the love-gift that she had been wont to wear about his own neck, and next his heart. If Helen could have looked into

his thoughts, she would have had good cause to call him faithless.

The unhappy couple were no longer on good terms enough even to quarrel. When by themselves, they rarely spoke to one another, and if they did, only on the most ordinary topics; and to be alone together was hateful to both of them. They occupied separate apartments; and at dinner, Mr Glyddon, the doctor, or some other neighbour, was generally invited, because, in the teeth of the proverb, three were company, and two were none. For a time Mrs Somers staid with them, but the good old lady was too scandalised by what she witnessed to remain a silent spectator of such 'goings on.' It was Helen whom she chiefly blamed for it all. 'My dear, a man is what his wife makes him,' was the opinion she had the temerity to express. 'That is rubbish,' was the irreverent reply. 'It is very easy for Arthur to be civil to you, in order to secure your good word. But how does he treat me?'

'Well, he's civil enough, at all events;' and, indeed, Arthur's manner towards his wife had that excessive polish, commonly termed 'the pink of politeness,' which, to the observer of human nature, is anything but a genuine sign of regard. 'And as for affection, my dear, you must remember that that's a flower as is nipped in the bud by frost; and I've seen you catch him up, and cut him short, in a way as I never ventured to use to your poor father, if he was ever so aggravating.'

But neither the metaphor nor the experience of Mrs Somers availed with Helen, to whom her mother's remonstrances at last became so intolerable, that she gave the old lady plainly to understand that she was overstaying her welcome at Swansdale Hall; and she departed. Curiously enough, as she had taken her son-in-law's part—not from a prejudice in his favour, of course, but because she really thought him hardly used, and also, perhaps, because that course seemed to her more conducive to mutual reconciliation—so did the sympathies of Uncle Magnus enlist themselves on Helen's side rather than on that of his own flesh and blood. The chivalry of his nature had doubtless something to do with this. The sight of the unhappiness of a woman was always a passport to his heart; but he also liked Helen for her own sake. He gave her credit for having herself dismissed Allardyce—for Arthur kept strict silence upon the reasons of that gentleman's sudden departure—and was inclined to believe that this was the result of his own paternal advice. Many a well-meant hint did he let fall, when his nephew and he were smoking their cigars, concerning domestic disagreements and their cure, and many a kindly endeavour did he make, when all three were together, to bring about a more comfortable state of things. Nay, so seriously did he take the matter to heart, that notwithstanding his habits of reticence, and jealous care for the honour of the family, he secretly wrote to Mrs Ralph Tyndall—a mere connection by marriage—to entreat her aid and that of her daughter Blanche towards a reconciliation. They were both most eager to offer their good services; but Mrs Ralph, who knew human nature far better than did Uncle Magnus, pointed out how dangerous would be any unsought interference on her part, and how imprudent it would be to invite herself to Swansdale on a venture in which Helen's own

mother herself had failed. She sent, indeed, a most pressing invitation to Arthur and his wife to come and stay with them in town, but the offer was declined.

Helen, whose health was by no means re-established, had been ordered by the doctors to the south of France. She was really very far from well, and the opinion of the London physician, that she should try the air of Brignon, had been a *bond fide* one; but Arthur smiled cynically when he heard it, and imagined that the idea had been suggested by Helen herself, in order to get away from Swansdale, and Jenny. He made no objection, however (if 'Try Van Diemen's Land' had been the verdict, he would have only replied: 'Very good, by all means,' and would have tried it), and took her to Brignon. They travelled by easy stages, and in the most comfortable manner; he had his man, and she her maid; the best private rooms in the hotels were secured beforehand; she had no necessity to express her wishes, for they were anticipated; and they did not exchange half-a-dozen words throughout the entire journey.

Brignon is on the sea-coast, and, if in England, would be considered the ugliest place within Her Majesty's dominions. Being in France, and difficult of access, it is spoken of by English people—even by those who have seen it—as picturesque. It has really fine sands and a noble sea-view; but the country around it is as flat as a pancake, and without a tree, with the exception of some mangy poplars—very like the trees in our cheap Noah's Arks—which fringe its sandy roads. It is not a cheap place, but it is a very dirty one, and the hotels are horrible. The spring was not far advanced when the Tyndalls arrived, and the fashionable visitors who resort to Brignon in the season were not due for months. In the meantime, it was occupied by the *bourgeoisie* of the neighbouring towns. To them, perhaps, it was cheap, and may not have seemed nasty. The air is splendid, health-giving, life-giving; and, in consequence of that attribute, one of the largest hospitals in France has been built at Brignon. A small portion of it only is used for the general purposes of a hospital; the rest is devoted to consumptive patients. These afflicted persons haunt the sands, like ghosts, for a few weeks; then gradually gain flesh and colour, and go away literally twice the men (or women) they were. The hospital is clean, and excellently conducted. The hotels conduct themselves—at least no landlord is ever found when a complaint has to be made—and very badly. The beds, indeed, are good, as all French beds are; but the rooms—even the best of them—are bare and wretched, and the domestic arrangements infamous. The principal dish at the principal table-d'hôte is (or was in the Tyndalls' time) liver and plums; but what the food is, is of small consequence when the appetite is raving for anything. At Brignon one could eat liver and plums four times a day, if one could get them; but such luxuries are not always forthcoming.

The amusement of the place is Swinging. From morning to night the population take their pleasure in swings, erected—perhaps by the government; at all events nobody pays—on the sea-shore. This already healthy locality is held still healthier if it is pervaded in a state of nature. Scruples, however, having been expressed

(probably by some English visitor) against this practice, a little clothing is worn. The gentlemen wear jerseys and drawers; the ladies affect some drapery; but nobody wears shoes or stockings. The sand of Brignon is almost as health-giving as its air. If Mrs Somers had been with her belongings, she would have remarked that the hair of Brignon was sandy; for it is so—very. The breeze that is always blowing there bears clouds of sand, but that is good (says the excellent head of the hospital staff) for the lungs and the eyes, and it certainly does them no harm. It was not under this gentleman's professional care that Mrs Tyndall was placed, because her London physician had recommended another; but he had an equal confidence in the miraculous air. 'Mrs Tyndall was sure to get well at Brignon,' he said; 'everybody did. But in order to effect a rapid cure, she must move rapidly through the air. There was nothing like swinging.'

It must be understood that the swings at Brignon are not merely composed of a seat and two ropes; but are regular boats, with two seats, such as in England are only seen at fairs. A Brignon market-woman will gravely put down her basket, invigorate herself with a swing or two, and then march on, pursuing her vocation till she comes to another erection of the same kind, when she will get in and swing again; the postman discontinues the delivery of the letters, to enjoy the same enchanting exercise; the priest on his way to administer the viaticum is perhaps the only exception to the practice, and he recompenses himself for the self-denial by a double amount of enjoyment on his way back. For do not let it be supposed that the occupation is of a frivolous character; it is pursued, on the contrary, with the utmost gravity. Stout ladies, mothers of families, and even those expecting to be more so, step stolidly into these machines, and are swung by their husbands, who (in jerseys and drawers) stand over them, like a colossus, with a foot on each side of the boat, and pull seriously at the rope above them, as though they were tolling a knell. Everybody is grave and sober throughout the operation, and nobody is sick. Perhaps Helen mistrusted herself in the latter respect, or being unable to swing herself, gave up the idea, as she could scarcely ask her husband to help her. After months of isolation and reserve, she could hardly break silence for the first time with 'Arthur, swing me.' As a substitute, though by no means an efficient one, for this healthful practice, the doctor recommended carriage-exercise.

So every day, a sort of mail phaeton with two prancing steeds drew up at the door of the *Brignon Hotel*, and the Milor Anglais, who was so polite and deferential to his wife that he might almost have been a Frenchman, stepped in with Miladi, and drove her along the flat roads between the poplars at good speed. Neither of them were desirous to have a witness to their frigid behaviour to one another; though a listener he would not have been, for they did not speak. So they were unaccompanied by a groom. However strange that might appear, there was surely no danger in it, for though the steeds were the freshest and fleetest that could be procured, Milor, like most of his countrymen, was skilful to guide them. The astonishment of the Brignon public was consequently great when, late one afternoon,

the mail phaeton returned, but without its occupants. That there had been an accident was certain, for one panel of the carriage was stained with clay, and the horses were in a bath of sweat, and looked wild and frightened. The public consternation was excessive: men of action forgot to swing, and expressed by pantomime, to eager spectators, how the wheel must have run up a bank, and Milor Anglais been pitched out from his high seat in this direction, and Miladi in that.

Everybody was shocked and desolated; nor were many hours suffered to elapse before men were despatched on the road the missing pair were known to have taken, to give aid, and more especially to make a due report of the affair to the authorities. The French (until late events revealed the imposture) have always been reckoned the readiest people in the world—which, indeed, they are with their tongues; but in the investigation of what we call 'accidents and offences,' they certainly do not err on the side of precipitancy. It was late at night, fortunately a moonlit one, before they discovered on a sharp decline (the only one in that part of the country) about ten miles from Brignon, one in this direction, and one in that, precisely as the pantomimist had described them, the bodies of Arthur Tyndall and his wife. Dead bodies they both seemed, when they were first lifted up; but this was not so. They were quite insensible, but they still breathed, and were at once conveyed to the accident wards of the Brignon hospital. The road was stony at the place where the catastrophe had occurred, and it was supposed that they had been pitched out on their heads, for they had each sustained a fracture of the skull. Miladi's injury was pronounced to be the most severe in this respect; but Milor, in addition to his head-wound, had broken bones and a snapped rib, which was thought to be pressing on his lungs. As it happened, both the accident wards were pretty full; but room was made for the new-comers; and they were tended with that care and tenderness which medical skill rarely fails to bestow, though its objects be ever so unknown and alien. The telegraph did not exist at Brignon, nor, to confess the truth, were the postal arrangements quite what they should have been, but within eight-and-forty hours from the time of the reception of the unhappy pair within the hospital, Mrs Ralph Tyndall was sitting at breakfast turning over a foreign letter, the handwriting of the address of which puzzled her not a little.

'Who on earth can this be from, Blanche?—Oh, great Heaven!'

'What is the matter, mamma?'

Her mother did not answer, but turning very white, threw the note across to Blanche, and vehemently rang the bell. The letter was from Helen's maid, and ran as follows:

My master and mistress have both met with dreadful accidents, and are lying in Brignon Hospital; from what I gather—but I cannot rightly understand what the people say—there is little hope of either of them surviving. My dear mistress was far from well before, and that, they tell me, makes her case more dangerous. For God's sake, come, madam, at once.

'Charles,' said Mrs Ralph to the servant who answered her summons, 'let some one be instantly despatched to Mr Adair's chambers in the Temple,

with the request that he should come here without a moment's delay; and send Maria to me at once.—Don't cry, my darling Blanche; that can do no good.' The large tears were stealing down her own face, nevertheless.

'O mamma, if Arthur and Helen have not been reconciled,' sobbed Blanche.

'That was my first thought, Blanche, also; but hush, hush!—Maria, pack up some clothes for us immediately; Miss Blanche and I are going abroad.' Then she took up a *Bradshaw*, and looked out for the tidal train. 'Come, that will suit well, at all events, and leave time for the passport to be *viséd*,' said she. 'I only trust Mr Adair will not fail us.'

'I will answer for Jack—I mean Mr Adair,' broke in Blanche.

'Very good, my dear; but I want him to answer for himself in person,' was Mrs Ralph's quiet reply. 'We two must go, of course, at all events; so, when you have finished your breakfast, you had better go to Maria.'

'I could not swallow a mouthful, mamma—it would choke me;' and she withdrew accordingly at once, to see, as well as her tears would permit, about the packing. She had never thought to cry—except with pleasure—at the prospect of having Jack Adair for her travelling companion; and that he was to be so, she felt certain. Nor was her confidence misplaced.

'It is awkward, of course,' was Mrs Ralph's reflection, 'and must needs throw them much together, which is the very thing I would have avoided. But Mr Adair is Arthur's oldest and best friend; and in a strait like this, I know no other man, that I can apply to, half as unselfish, prompt, and useful. Poor dear Arthur—poor Helen! What an end to their short married life; and what a sad life it has been! The money was on the wrong side there too.' Mrs Ralph Tyndall was a woman of the world, though not a worldly woman. She liked Adair exceedingly, but she would have liked him better, and certainly looked more favourably on him, as a suitor for her daughter's hand, if his affairs had been more prosperous. Whatever were her personal wishes or apprehensions, however, they were never suffered to interfere with what she felt to be her duties to others; and soon after noon that day, Mrs Ralph Tyndall and her daughter were in the express to Folkestone, with Mr John Adair, barrister-at-law, for their escort, bound for Brignon.

CHAPTER XXX.—IN HOSPITAL.

White beds, bare walls, carpetless floors, strange noiseless figures bending over beds—'Hush, hush!' What did all this mean? thought Arthur Tyndall, coming to himself after days that seemed weeks in the ward at Brignon Hospital; and where was he, and what had happened? Some accident, for he felt stiff and bruised all over, and could scarce stir a limb, and there were bandages about him. It was an effort even to keep his eyes open, and he closed them again; besides, it was easier to think when they were shut. Wherever he was, he had not been left alone; far from it. Streams of people had been to see him—rivers, seas, wave after wave of them. Allardyce, for one, which was curious, considering what had happened between them; and Paul Jones, with an ace of spades up his sleeve, which he pulled up and down, to shew it him for his amusement. Uncle

Magus, too, had brought his pistols with him for the same purpose, and had described to him how he had shot the Frenchman with one of them, which was imprudent of the old gentleman, considering that they were in France—in France, yes—but whereabouts? Well, perhaps that would come presently. Let us think, think, think. There's a bell tolling, which means that somebody's dead. *Well, perhaps you had better drive yourself, then.* Who said that? Once more he opened his eyes—this time in alarm, for the voice had been very loud—and whom should they light upon, sitting beside him, with a very grave face, but Jack Adair!

'Dear Jack,' said Arthur; 'so good of you;' and then, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, he began to cry. He was neither ashamed nor astonished at himself; but what did astonish him, even at that weak and wretched pass to which he had been reduced, was that Jack cried too—Jack, whom he had never seen moved to tears; Jack, who, although of tender heart, was the last man in the world to 'give way,' or exhibit sentiment in a sentimental shape—Jack cried like a child. Why should Jack cry? It touched him, no doubt, to find his friend in hospital, and in such evil case, and to hear what had befallen him. But there again was the hitch. What had befallen him? What had he been doing? Where had he been going? *Well, perhaps you had better drive yourself, then?*

'You have said that twice, old fellow,' said Jack softly.

Had he? Now, that was curious, for those were the very words that he himself had used to Helen before the carriage was upset.

That ray of consciousness was too much for him; it seemed as though too much light had been let into his brain, and dazed it. He sank again into stupor, thence to sleep, and when he woke, the day had far advanced. But Jack was watching beside him as before—dear, faithful Jack, who had come (doubtless) post-haste from England for that very purpose. But there were no tears now; he felt much stronger, and his mind was clearer far.

'How is Helen?'

Perhaps Jack did not hear; at all events, he did not answer.

'Where is my wife?'

'Here; under this roof,' was the grave reply.

'Was she badly hurt?'

'Yes.'

'Poor soul! poor soul! Tell me about it,' said Arthur.

'Nay, we know nothing except that you were both brought here, much hurt. You were pitched out on your head, and had concussion of the brain.'

'And Helen?'

'The same.'

How very short Jack's answers were. But then, as he had said, he had nothing to tell.

'It happened in this way,' said Arthur. 'We were coming very fast down the hill, and Helen said: "Take care." That was the first word she had spoken throughout the drive; but then, it is true, I had not spoken either. We were not on good terms, Jack, nor had we been for months.'

'Hush, hush! For Heaven's sake, do not talk of that now.'

'Very good; I won't. I am very sorry it was so. I will make an effort—now that this has

happened—to change all that. I will do my very best. Helen shall see’—

‘How did it happen, Arthur?’ interrupted Adair nervously. ‘Keep to that, if you can, and if trying to think it out does not hurt you. What took place after she said “Take care?”’

‘Well, that annoyed me. I knew how to drive well enough, of course; and it is disagreeable to be interfered with. And then to think that that should be the first time she had opened her lips to me. So, “Perhaps you had better drive yourself,” said I; and I made as though I would have handed over the reins to her.’

‘Great Heavens!’ ejaculated Adair, with horror. ‘And did she take them?’

‘No; but it made me inattentive to the horses—reckless; and just then something happened to frighten them on the road-side, and they ran up the bank, and, as I suppose, spilt us.’

‘That will do for to-night, Arthur; you look a little feverish. I will come again to-morrow morning.’

‘Thanks, old fellow. Pray, give my love to Helen. You have seen her to-day, have you not? They do let you see her, I hope; or is she too ill?’

‘I have not seen her,’ answered Jack, speaking with difficulty; his tongue seemed glued to his mouth. ‘She was placed in the female accident ward, you see; but Blanche saw her.’

‘Blanche here! Why, how is that? You two have not made a runaway match of it, have you?’

‘No, no.’ Never was seen such a sickly smile upon Jack’s face before. It was more mournful by far than his tears had been. ‘Blanche and her mother are both here. They left London the same day they got the news of your accident.’

‘To nurse Helen? How good of them, and of you, too, Jack. Blanche may come here, I know; I have seen ladies here, visiting their friends. Bring her to-morrow; I do so long to hear about poor Helen.’

Let us return to the hotel with Adair. Mrs Ralph and Blanche occupy with him the same sitting-room that Arthur and Helen used, and for which, alas, they have now no occasion. They are both looking pale and wretched; and even on the elder lady’s face—who is scarcely more given to exhibit emotion in public than Jack himself—are traces of recent tears. They both look up from their needlework as he comes in; but not even Blanche has a smile for him.

‘How is he?’ they inquire simultaneously, with anxiety, but with much more of sadness, as one who, having been already struck by evil fortune, is somewhat numb to the second blow.

‘Better; he has come to himself, and told me how it all happened, and so forth.’

‘And did you tell him?’ asked Blanche.

‘I could not,’ replied Adair apologetically: ‘I dared not. I know it was very cowardly of me. I said you would come to-morrow.—I know what you are thinking, dear Mrs Tyndall; how it is always you poor women who are expected to say and do the unpleasant things. But Arthur is my oldest friend; and Blanche knows so well how to approach—how to break such tidings. I might blurt it out and kill him.’

‘I will do my best,’ said Blanche, sobbing a little; ‘but I think, dear mamma, that you would do it better.’

‘Well, I have prepared him to see you, Blanche,’ said Adair, ‘and I think, if your mother went, he would guess what has happened at once.—What do you think, Mrs Tyndall?’

‘I think Blanche had better go; he is more used to her. But I shall accompany her to the hospital, of course. You and I, Mr Adair, can stay below in the waiting-room.’

‘Shall I wear this, mamma?’ said Blanche, pointing to the work she was engaged on—some article of black crape. ‘The woman said our dresses would be home to-night.’

‘I think not, dear; it might strike him at once, then, and— O poor Arthur!’ At this, the tears of both women flowed afresh, and Adair went to the window and looked out for some minutes in silence: it was a fine clear evening, but all seemed mist to him.

The next day, Blanche went to see Arthur, as had been arranged. But she had over-estimated her self-control, and at Arthur’s first question, ‘How is Helen?’ she remained speechless.

‘Have you not seen her to-day, Blanche?’

She shook her head; she tried to frame some plausible excuse; but the vision of what she had seen but yesterday—the gaunt, stiff form under the hospital sheet, that was all that was now left of the blooming bride of not a year ago—came into her mind, and froze her speech.

‘She is dead!’ groaned Arthur, and turned his face to the white wall.

It was no place for the luxury of grief; the already crowded ward had received an accession of new inmates, in consequence of an accident occasioned by the collapse of a circus tent in the town; nor was Arthur’s sorrow of the sort to be assuaged by giving vent to it. Not only regret, but something very like remorse, was consuming him. The last words he had uttered to his dead wife had been peevish, if not passionate; the last look he had given her had been one of displeasure, if not dislike. What would he not have given to have recalled even those last few minutes which they had spent together, and to have substituted another look and other words for those he had used! He did not think of her share in their estrangement, but only of his own. He pictured her to himself at her very best—happy, radiant, and devoted—as on the day he married her.

‘Did she suffer?’ asked he presently in a voice so different from his own that it might have emanated from some neighbour patient—a ghostly voice, that seemed to be made up of echoes from the past.

‘I trust not, Arthur; I think not. As I learn from the authorities here, she got better after the first day; they had great hopes indeed; and Maria was permitted to come and sit with her more than once. But on the night before we arrived, a sudden change for the worse took place— But I am torturing you.’

‘No, no,’ pleaded Arthur. ‘Tell me all. What I imagine for myself is far worse than ought you can have to say.’

‘There is little more to tell, Arthur. Maria saw her dear mistress on that night.’

‘She was quite herself in mind?’

‘I— I think not, Arthur. She spoke very little about anything; but she seemed stronger, and had no fears about herself. Yet when Maria came here as usual the next morning, they told her that

her mistress had passed away; and she went upstairs and found it so. Judge of our horror, Arthur, to find such news as this awaiting us! The certificate of our dear one's death was sent that very day. I do believe that all was done that could be done. But only think of it—to have happened among strangers in a room like this!—Here sobs choked poor Blanche, and she hid her face on Arthur's pillow.

'But you went yourself, Blanche, and saw her?'

'O yes, as much as I dared to see,' answered she with a shudder. 'Mamma and I went up to the little bed with her name written upon the head of it—"Helen Tyndall"—which, I suppose, Maria had supplied, and we knelt down by it and bade her good-bye.'

'And I must see her and bid her good-bye' too, Blanche.'

'That is impossible, Arthur; the doctor told us it would kill you to be moved.'

'Would to Heaven it would!' groaned he. 'That is all that is left for me now to do—to die!'

Such an extremity of wretchedness was in his face and tone, that Blanche was filled not only with pity for him, but with a certain awe: the spectacle was more than she could bear alone.

'Mamma and Mr Adair are below, Arthur; might I tell them to come up?'

He was still so weak and crippled that he could make no sign of acquiescence, and speech had once more failed him; but his eyes said 'Yes.' So Mrs Ralph Tyndall and Adair were sent for. Upon the former he cast a grateful look, which she well understood; but it was no time for thanks.

'They tell me I cannot even see her,' murmured he.

'No, dear Arthur; that is impossible; they say it will be days before you can leave your bed with safety. In the meantime, you know, you have only to express your wishes to myself or Mr Adair, and everything shall be done in accordance with them.'

'I am trying to think what *she* would have wished,' he whispered. 'Where is her poor mother?'

'We expect her every hour. I wrote to her at her London address directly I got Maria's letter; but it seems she was out of town on a series of visits. They could not tell me for certain where she was, or when she would learn the news. Next to yourself, Arthur, my heart bleeds for her.'

'*She* deserves your pity,' replied Arthur in a hollow voice; then, after a pause: 'It is only right that her mother should decide; but I think she should be taken back to Swansdale.'

'That seems fittest, Arthur; to her own home.'

'Yes; but it was not a happy home,' groaned the sick man. 'Blanche—Jack—where are you?'

They came forward, standing each upon one side of the little bed.

Mrs Ralph made a half-movement of disapproval: she apprehended what was coming, perhaps, but did not feel so certain of it as to justify her interference; or perhaps the circumstances of the case forbade it. At all events, there was no interruption to what followed.

'Blanche,' said Arthur with a tenderness as grave as that which haunts the tones of a dying man, 'when *you* are married, you will have no cause to mistrust your husband; but if a shadow of suspicion of his fidelity should ever threaten

your bright days, put it from you, I beseech you, for it will darken the brightest.—Jack—dear Jack, it would be out of place, indeed, should I give advice to *you*; but I pray Heaven when you and Blanche are one—for that will be—that you may never have to reproach yourself on her account too late; that *you* may never wish to recall look, speech, or thought of her—and wish in vain.'

It was not until three days afterwards that Mrs Somers arrived at Brignon, too late to see the last of her dead Helen. Even then, Arthur was not in a condition to be moved. So Adair remained to look after him; while the two ladies, escorted by Mr Glyddon, who came over for that purpose, journeyed to Swansdale with their sad charge. Blanche never forgot those three days' travel. Extreme wretchedness had induced in poor Mrs Somers a sort of stupor, which necessitated Mrs Ralph's whole attention and tendance, but none of the woeful incidents of the way were spared to her daughter. The bereaved mother would not be separated from the coffin that held her dear one's remains, so the dead and the living journeyed by the same train. The shocks to which the feelings of Blanche were thus necessarily subjected at every break of line, and in the change from rail to steamboat, were very severe; while the vulgar curiosity that their awful burden excited was to the last degree distressing. She had never been deeply attached to Helen, but she had been intimate with her, as girls of the same age about to be somewhat closely connected with one another naturally become, and her nerves were terribly jarred from first to last. The burial itself was far more trying than such sad scenes usually are, from the absence of him who should have been the chief-mourner, and its cause, as well as from the comparison that would intrude itself between the present and the time they had spent at Swansdale, such a little while ago, when she whom they now laid in her grave was a blooming girl in the happy anticipation of her bridal hour.

As Mrs Somers insisted upon being present at the funeral, Mrs Ralph and Blanche could not do otherwise than bear her company; and when all was over, they carried the poor forlorn woman with them to their own home. Mrs Ralph urged Uncle Magus to come also, but the old man pressed her hand, and shook his head, and in a faltering voice replied: 'I shall not leave home, my dear, till I am carried yonder, whither *she* has gone so sadly soon.' It seemed as though ten years of sorrow had fallen upon his gray head at once.

HUNTING.

HUNTING, which occupied so large a space in the lives of our ancestors, is happily, in these days, no longer the principal occupation, except with the most inveterate lovers of sport. Having been one of the forms of war in which men disputed the empire of the earth with wild animals, it is now a simple pleasure, which does not interfere with more serious duties. But from the influence it has exercised in the world, it merits a passing attention, as one of the manifestations of human energy. Its history is intimately connected with every country, as for a long period it was the exclusive occupation of kings and nobles, when war did not call them to the battle-field, and, by the abuses it gave

rise to, became a cause of misery and oppression for the people, and furnished one of their most serious complaints against their rulers. It has, in a certain degree, been a point of departure for the civilisation of the world. Man first obtained his daily nourishment in this way, and his intelligence was roused into seeking the means for defending himself against the attacks of savage beasts. When he had triumphed over them, and the cultivation of the ground had insured his subsistence, hunting became one of his highest pleasures. To the charm of what is unexpected, it joins that of difficulties vanquished, and sets those faculties to work which are necessary to triumph over obstacles, such as patience, observation, decision, and courage.

If we look back to the origin of hunting, we find that, from the highest antiquity, every nation gave itself up to it, with the single exception of the Hebrews, who, according to their law, held all game in aversion as unclean, and confined themselves to the protection of their flocks from the attacks of savage animals. The Egyptians hunted the wild-goat, the antelope, the jackal, and the hyena, by means of bows and arrows. The Assyrians attacked lions, wild bulls and boars; whilst the Greeks honoured the chase so much as to worship it in the person of Diana. Xenophon wrote the first treatise on the subject: according to his ideas, a hunter must be about twenty years of age, with a supple body, and well-tryed courage; his education for it should commence with his earliest years, and take the precedence of every other study. The Greeks hunted on foot, and used nets spread out, into which they drove the game, with the assistance of dogs. In later times they made use of hounds, which could seize the game when running.

The Romans seem to have had but little fancy for the chase, until the Scipios brought it into fashion on their return from Greece, when it appears to have rapidly developed, since all their poets mention it. They formed immense inclosures with snares and feathered cords; large companies of beaters and packs of dogs drove the animals, whilst men on horseback prevented them from forcing the line. Under the Empire, hunting fell into disuse, the thirst for blood finding its satisfaction in the games of the circus. The government even forbade the killing of lions, in order to preserve them for these popular pleasures. They were taken alive by means of pits or nets, into which they were drawn by baits of their favourite morsels.

The real country of the chase in these olden times was Gaul, which, covered with forests, *landes*, and marshes, remained for centuries, notwithstanding progressive clearings, a wooded territory, with a rude climate, much feared by the Romans. It need scarcely be said that these immense forests were then, according to the words of the poet, *stabula alta ferarum*—stables of wild beasts. Such were the bison and the aurochs, the unicorn of the Scripture, both of which were to be found in the Hercynian forest in the time of Cæsar. The lynx frightened the hunters by its ferocity; the bear, which is still found in the mountains, abounded in many places, from which it has now for ever disappeared; and innumerable bands of wolves ventured even into the towns, to devour the corpses which civil discord, misery, epidemics, and the barbarity of the feudal chiefs multiplied. Troops of wild boars and pigs wandered in the oak forests,

living upon the acorns; foxes were as numerous as wolves; and the giant elks, reindeer, and stags continued to live in the places which they had inhabited from the days of the early Celts. To these may be joined all the smaller game, which the nobles afterwards preserved for their own pleasure, and even multiplied, to the enormous injury of the cultivators of the soil.

Charlemagne, who was as passionately devoted to the chase as his predecessors, endeavoured to restrain the usurpations of the nobility by interdicting any new reserves, and laying down rigorous laws against poaching. He arranged his hunting appointments with the greatest show of luxury. Four whips had the charge of the packs of hounds, and a falconer that of the birds of prey. Other officers attended to the shooting-parties, to the hunting of the beaver, and to the greyhounds. They were subordinate to the principal dignitaries of the court, who gave them instructions for the meetings at different châteaux. Every year, towards the end of summer, Charlemagne went to one or other of these palaces, and passed the autumn in his favourite amusement, surrounded by the princes and princesses of his family, and all his court. In August they hunted the stag, and the wild-boar for the remainder of the time. The organisation was like that of a military expedition, and resembled the immense battues which the sovereigns of Germany delighted in during the last century. Armies of men to beat the woods, and many packs of dogs, drove all the animals of a large district into inclosures of nets and snares, where the hunters of the highest rank attacked them on horseback with the lance and the javelin. It was the especial delight of this renowned monarch to shew the splendour of his hunting arrangements to foreign princes, not forgetting the display of his own courage and address. The histories of those days are full of recitals of his prowess.

When the feudal system was organised on the ruins of the Carolingian empire, hunting became one of the peculiar privileges of the nobles, and they seldom went into the country without the companionship of their falcons and dogs. Not a fête was given without this forming the chief amusement; not a château could be found without its large hall ornamented with the trophies of the chase mingled with those of war. Their fashion was to force and head the game by the help of dogs, and afterwards kill it with a boar-spear. The Normans imported this taste with them into England. William the Conqueror set the fashion to his nobles with a right good will, and there was nothing in his detested reign that made him more unpopular than the wasting of an immense district in Hampshire to form his New Forest. The Anglo-Saxon kings had left many fine parks and inclosures for hunting; but not content with these, 'for his insatiate and superfluous pleasure,' as a chronicler describes it, he desired a ground close to his favourite city of Winchester, and therefore laid waste no fewer than thirty-six parish churches, with their surrounding villages, and many fine manors, from which he drove the owners and the people. It extended over the whole of the south-western part of Hampshire, measuring thirty miles from Salisbury to the sea, and not less than ninety miles in circumference. The extreme suffering of the poor people, and the wrongs done to the clergy, made a strong impression on the people, and they quickly

recognised the punishment awarded by Providence in the tragical events which befell the Conqueror's family in the course of a few years. Here it was that his second son, Richard, was gored to death by a stag whilst hunting; and in 1096, another member of his family, the son of Duke Robert, was killed in the Forest by an arrow, said to have been shot at random. Popular superstition grew more and more confirmed in the idea that dreadful spectres were seen in its shades; and the devil himself, it was said, had appeared to William Rufus, and announced his coming doom.

Falconry was a sport in which the ladies loved to share; the noble bird was decked with the greatest care, and golden bells hung to its feet. Large amounts of money were paid for a first-rate falcon; and our romantic king, Richard Cœur-de-Lion, had nearly forfeited the price of his life to secure one. He was on his way to the Crusade in Palestine, when, tempted by the beauties of Naples, he lingered there, and whilst waiting for the French fleet arriving in Sicily, took horse, accompanied by one knight and rode to Salerno, to see the famous cathedral built by his Norman relatives, and to learn something of the accomplishments that were taught in that city, then a centre of poetry, rhetoric, and natural philosophy. Careless of roads, he passed through Calabria, where the mountain torrents were swelled by rain, his galleys following along the shore. Here he heard that in a certain village a man had a very superior hawk, which, according to the laws of that age, none but a noble was allowed to keep. Richard, careless of consequences, went into the hut, and seized the valued possession: the defrauded peasant ran after him, demanding its restoration, but in vain; the village was roused, and the proud Calabrians attacked the king with sticks and stones. One drew his long knife; and in defending himself, the sword in Richard's hand broke, so that, spurring his horse, he was obliged to take refuge in flight, and had not a priory been near, in which he took refuge, the life of the adventurous monarch would probably have ended in that disgraceful manner.

To Francis I., France was indebted for many of the beautiful parks and forests which the lovers of pleasure now enjoy. The Bois de Boulogne was formed that he might hunt close to his capital, and the Château de Madrid built in it for his night's rest. Fontainebleau, with its forty acres of forest, often resounded with the *fanfares* of the huntsmen, and the gay train of the king and Diane de Poitiers galloped through its wooded glades and picturesque gray rocks. More than once, his life was in imminent peril when fighting hand to hand with the wild-boars caught in the nets; and one day he was dragged from his saddle by a stag, which threw him to the ground, without his betraying the least emotion. Insensible to fatigue, he never permitted cold, rain, or wind to stop him; and when overtaken by night, sought shelter in the most miserable cabins. His hunting equipage surpassed that of all his predecessors. Chambord, once the Versailles of the south, owes its singular and fantastic castle to him, which he built, after his imprisonment in Spain, for a hunting-lodge; as also Villar-Cotterets, where the palace is now changed into a poor-house.

Versailles, it is well known, owed its grandeur to the love of Louis XIII. for hunting; the woods

which surround the miserable hamlet were one of his favourite resorts. Tired of sleeping in a wind-mill or a *cabaret*, when wearied with his long rides through the forest of St Leger, he built a small pavilion, which was replaced in 1627 by an elegant chateau, which, under Louis XIV., assumed its present gigantic proportions. This last-named monarch made his début in boar-hunting at the early age of four years, in the garden of the Palais-Royal; and during his whole reign, shewed the greatest fondness for the sport. His daily journal betrays the large portion of time given up to it in the midst of events which precipitated the French monarchy to ruin. Nor were the nobles behind-hand in imitating, and even surpassing their liege lords in the luxury of their hunting appointments. Among the foremost of these was the Prince de Condé, whose beautiful retreat at Chantilly still preserves its immense natural forest, with the green turf-drives throughout its extent, between hawthorn hedges, where the lords and ladies drove to the meet of the staghounds.

A curious ceremony of the middle ages was long kept up at Chantilly: a dogs' mass, which was celebrated with much magnificence on each anniversary of St Hubert's Day, the patron saint of dogs. On this solemn occasion, the chapel was decked with flowers, flowers were strewn on the floor, they covered the high altar, and festooned the great circular court of the chateau. The oldest gentleman among the retainers of the House of Bourbon-Condé, mounted on the oldest horse in the Prince's stable, and followed by the oldest dog, proceeded to the kennels, where the various packs had been well washed, curried, combed, and shorn. The whippers-in and huntsmen led them out, and, following the old gentleman and his dog, went to the chapel. There the different packs were introduced into the sanctuary, according to the priority which sporting traditions ascribed to their respective races. Such dogs as had distinguished themselves in the chase were placed in the front row, before a picture of St Hubert, which formed the altar-piece. The almoner of the chateau then commenced the sacrifice of the mass, taking care to omit nothing contained in the litany of the day. When the office was ended, the Prince's favourite preacher ascended the pulpit, and pronounced a panegyric on the patron of dogs and hunters. During the service, several grooms, armed with sharply pointed goads, kept a strict watch over their charges, and woe betide the unhappy hound that yawned or attempted to go to sleep! This ceremony was believed to be a good specific against accidents to which dogs are liable, or diseases to which they succumb, especially hydrophobia.

So passionate in the pursuit of stags were some of our kings, that a visit to a nobleman's estate for the purpose of hunting was considered as a calamity rather than a favour. Queen Elizabeth, whose love for the chase rivalled that of her predecessors, was on one occasion at Berkeley Castle, and no less than twenty-seven prime stags were slaughtered in one day. The earl, who was absent at the time, was indignant that his splendid collection of deer should have been so interfered with, and, to shew his displeasure, broke up his inclosures and his hunting establishment. It had, however, nearly cost him his head and his estate, for the queen felt the rebuke, and was not one tamely to submit, and he received a hint that the Earl of Leicester was

quite prepared to take the latter. In this reign, pedestrian huntsmen used the stalking-horse, in order to reach the game unperceived: it was a light canvas figure of a cow or horse in the act of grazing, which was carried in the hand, under cover of which the sportsman could approach very closely, and so shoot down the game with ease. The use of the musket also brought hawking into disuse; the latter was attended with such enormous expense, owing to the high price of falcons, as well as the large training establishment necessary, that the nobility were glad to give it up; and after that queen's reign, hawking ceased to be one of our national amusements. With the exception of an occasional stag-hunt, when the poor animal is uncarted, and the dogs let loose after it, a very inferior game to finding it in its forest home, our English sporting is now confined to hunting the fox, which is but a pretext for a number of country gentlemen to meet each other, and gallop over hedge and ditch for pure love of exercise during the cold dull days of winter.

WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY.

IN THIRTY-FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER XV.

Methought the billows spoke and told me of it,
The winds did sing it to me.

YOUNG Robertson, borne away in the night on the shoulders of four stout men, was quickly placed in the stern-sheets of a boat which lay on the beach; and in the momentary lull, the boat was run out into the surf, and his bearers taking each an oar, pulled manfully out to sea. That the ways of the place were peculiar, and that, perhaps, the hotel was on an island, was the impression Gerard had on his mind; but when the boat lay to under the lee of a ship, and a sling was lowered therefrom, he began to think that he was under the influence of some enchantment. Before, however, he could realise his position, he found himself swinging in the air like a crate, and presently standing on the deck.

There was a fine strong wind blowing from the south, right across the mouth of the estuary—a healthy, invigorating breeze, which revived his spirits, and renewed his nerve. Those stupid boatmen had made a mistake, that was all.

There were no lights in the ship, except one at the mast-head, and the glimmer of a lamp from the after-cabin. No one seemed to notice his presence; he spoke to the sailors who were hauling the boat up to its davits, but they replied only with a gruff 'Dim Sassenach.' Gerard began to take stock of himself, which he had been unable to do before, lapped up by feminine care. He was all right on his legs; his right arm was a little stiff, but still usable; his left arm was bound up in splints, and it was an agony to touch it. Generally, he was sore and uncomfortable, but still strong and capable. He had been feverish; the fever had left him; he was quite cool and collected in mind.

He made his way to the after-part of the ship, and opened the door of the cabin whence the light proceeded. It was a small, comfortable cabin, square, with a door on each side; there was a little table in the middle, and fixed seats on each side; overhead hung a swinging tray of glasses and decanters; an oil-lamp, fixed over the further door, illumined the scene. A tall, stout fellow, brown

and bearded, sat with his back to the light, his elbows on the table, smoking a short black pipe, and conning carefully a chart.

'I say, old fellow,' said Gerard, 'you'll excuse my interrupting you; but there's been a mistake.'

'Ha!' said the man, leaning back in his seat, 'I see now: you're the captain's neevy as is come for a trip to Liverpool. Bring yourself to an anchor.'

'That's the mistake,' said Gerard; 'I'm not the captain's nephew. Please have a boat lowered again, and send me ashore.'

'Now, look here,' said the man gruffly; 'I ain't the captain of this here ship—I'm only the mate—I ain't. Think I'm going agin orders?'

'But,' said Gerard, 'I *must* go on shore. I insist on it.'

'All right!' said the man. 'Go, then.'

'Order your men to get a boat ready.'

'Nay; I didn't say agin about that. There's no orders for that.'

'What am I to do, then?'

'Wait till the captain comes aboard.'

'And when will that be?'

'How should I know? He don't ask my leave to stay away.'

'You're not very polite, sir!'

'I've manners enough for a mate.'

Gerard sat down. He began to think he had better await the arrival of the captain. Ah! how different this bare, creaking cabin to the comfortable, quiet room he had quitted; what an exchange for the pleasant gossip with the daughter of the house, the society of this rough mate! Why couldn't he have been contented to stay where he was? Presently, the rocking of the ship, the creaking of the cabin, the hum of the wind in the rigging, all blended undistinguishably in Gerard's ears. He nodded off again to sleep.

'Hollo! mate,' cried the voice of the sailor, 'you're drowsy, mate. Go in here, and lie down.'

Gerard, thankful to rest anywhere, tumbled into the cabin pointed out to him, laid himself down on the berth, and composed himself to rest once more.

'You'll call me when the captain comes?'

'Ay, ay, mate.'

The swing of the ship as she rose and sank on the swell, the song that the wind sang about the cordage, the creak and rattle of everything about him—strange, unfamiliar sounds—yet soothed his tired senses; he slept soundly and heavily.

He awoke to a blank sense of misery and despair.

No single particle of his body was at rest—nor, indeed, could he realise that he had a body. He might indeed be some lost soul floating helplessly in chaos. A sharp twinge of pain, as he was flung against the side of the bunk, brought him back to a sense of physical suffering. And then he heard the hurly-burly of the storm. All the woodwork of his cabin, every plank of the deck above, every timber of the ship about him, seemed instinct with tortured life, and groaned, and moaned, and shrieked in ceaseless chorus. Blow after blow, the ship shuddered under the impact of the waves, which, like pursuing serpents, first struck, and then be-slaved the flying ship. The angry roar of the wind almost choked the wail of the rigging; but intermittently with deafening noise, some loosened fragment of blocks and cordage lashed the quivering deck, as though with rods of iron. Slowly and painfully, Gerard realised his actual position—

the ship had gone to sea, and they were in a great storm.

CHAPTER XVI.

All that glisters is not gold,
Often have you heard that told.

When the banker went down to his bank on the morning after Gerard had been put on board ship, he felt rather more easy in his mind than he had done for the last two days. It was quite certain now that he would have a short time in which he might get assistance. After all, his affairs could not be in such a bad condition as John would make out. He could not understand how it happened that his credit with his London agents had fallen so low. He had left matters to his clerk a good deal lately; he must see to things himself for the future. He would go up to town, and take with him all his available securities, and get an advance from one of the great London private banks. All bankers have an interest in keeping up one of their own class. Mistrust, once begotten, may spread wide and deep. He would transfer his agency at once to the bank who made the advance, and then he would pay out Messrs Brown and Bostock.

As for that nonsense about casting away his ship, John never could have taken him seriously; the thing was absurd. The *Arthur's Bride* had gone out to sea, and would be next heard of at Liverpool, and the young gentleman, her compulsory passenger, would have a pleasant sea-voyage; and afterwards, they would have a good laugh together over the absurd mistake that had been made; for he would himself see the authorities in London, and, with the money in his hand, would soon explain the dishonour of his son's draft. Yes, all would be well. He had weathered many storms in his day; he would weather this last one too, and the rest of his life should pass in calm and peace. He would take a young partner with capital; or, perhaps, he would sell the whole concern to a joint-stock bank, and live quietly on his means. For he must have plenty—if he could only realise them. First, then, he would go to the bank, and see that all was in good trim, and give John his instructions; then he would post to the railway station, and reach London, so that he might be in Lombard Street by ten o'clock next morning, to see about his affairs.

When he reached the bank door, he found it closed; it was barely ten; but John was not there, as usual, waiting for the stroke of the clock to throw open the door and shutters. Some one else was standing there, however—a little man in gray, with a quiet, placid face, patient, but a little anxious; his dog stood beside him, a smooth-haired, black-and-white dog, of somewhat depressed and self-conscious mien. The man's face brightened up as he saw Mr Rowlands. John, the clerk, now came leisurely to the door, and undid the fastenings. There was something about his bearing, a sort of freedom and indifference, that Rowlands had not noticed before in him.

The little man in gray was standing at the counter when the safes were opened and the books taken out.

'Well, Thomas,' said the banker, 'what can I do for you?'

'I want the money for this, if you please,' said the man, laying upon the table an old and ragged note.

'You've had this note a good while?' said the banker, looking at it.

'Yes, indeed; my father gave it me when I was married, twenty years ago. Mr Rowlands; and my son's going to be married too, Mr Rowlands, and I'm going to give him the same.'

'And you want a new note in exchange for the old one?'

'Nagoes,' said the man sheepishly; 'I want the money; *dim papier*.'

'Stupid fellow!' said John, pushing forward; 'you don't want gold; you'll only spend it, or get robbed, perhaps. Here's a new note for you, Thomas, *bach*; and tell your son to keep it fifteen years like you.'

The man didn't say anything, but stood there doggedly, not taking up either of the notes.

'Don't you mean to take the note?' said the banker, looking sternly at him.

Thomas was dreadfully frightened. It was a shocking thing to offend Mr Rowlands; one didn't know what might happen after. But to lose five pounds—ah, that would be more dreadful still! Thomas trembled, therefore, but still stuck to the counter. And whilst Thomas Davies of Hendre stood there waiting in the bank, William Jones of Tyddynmaur came in very quietly and timidly, and presently Morris Evans of the Pandy crept in also; and they both had old ragged notes in their hands. And after them came a few more, so that there was quite a little crowd at the counter.

The banker looked at his clerk, who looked blankly back.

'Give Thomas his gold, John,' said Mr Rowlands, walking into his private room to rouse himself for the occasion. Now, indeed, if he had lost the confidence of the country people, he was utterly shipwrecked. Rowlands' notes had always passed current at fair and market more freely even than gold. Bank of England notes had no chance with them. All the banks of the county charged sixpence or more for changing a Bank of England note, and John Jones consequently wouldn't look at them. It was astonishing what a quantity of notes Rowlands kept afloat. Certainly, by law, his circulation was limited to a fixed amount; but, practically, the matter was left to the banker's conventional conscience. The only check upon him was, that he was required to make a declaration before a justice of the peace as to the amount he had in circulation. John always prepared this declaration, and Rowlands would take his affidavit on the strength of John's assurance it was all right. In this way, neither was damaged.

But Rowlands knew well that when once a rumour to his discredit had gained currency amongst his countrymen, that nothing short of an impression more vivid and startling would drive the idea out of their heads. If he could make a sudden and visible display of wealth, something that would make them all talk and wonder, he might yet be saved. But he had barely enough gold for the ordinary business of the day. Rowlands peeped out of his door: the counting-house was now crowded with men; the air was hot and stifling; they were beginning to be clamorous. All of a sudden, the banker's face brightened; he had seized an idea. He came out of his room quite brisk and confident; he walked round the inside of the counter, smiling, and rubbing his hands. 'Well, my friends,' he cried, 'and so you all

want gold! Are your daughters going all to be married; or is it the old cow that is dead, and you want to buy another? Well, whatever it is, you shall have your gold.—Come, John, *bach*, let us get ready for these good people. Run down to Mrs Jones, the gardener, and ask her for two or three of her peck measures.'

John, however, had no occasion to go; half-a-dozen eager volunteers started off for the gardener's shop. They returned, bearing two baskets only.

'Only two!' cried Rowlands. 'Well, they must do till we get some more.'

The new bronze-money had just come in, and Rowlands had received a consignment of two cases of halfpence, bright new money, not yet seen by anybody in Wales. With the help of John, he emptied the contents of these cases into a basket, which they filled within a few inches; upon these he poured half-a-dozen bags of sovereigns.

'Now,' he cried, 'which are the strongest three men amongst you?'

There was a little dispute as to this, but finally, Evan, John, and William were selected as the representatives of the strength of the county side.

'Then come inside the counter, and help to lift this money.'

The three men and John, with immense difficulty, lifted the basket on to the counter.

'Now,' said the banker, passing his hands through the gold, and letting it glide in golden streams between his fingers—'now, who will come first to be paid?—John, you'll be filling the other basket.'

To all those men standing there, Rowlands had been such a power, so much of their prosperity in life had depended upon him, that only the overpowering fear of immediate loss of money would have nerved them to oppose or attack him.

Nobody came forward. The popular idea of the immense resources of the banker was confirmed. Who could afford to be the enemy of a man who measured gold in peck-baskets?

All that day the public-houses of Aberhirnant were filled. At least three hundred times in the day had each of the three men who had helped to carry the gold to repeat the wonderful story. When Rowlands went up the street, he was cheered and run after by the crowd. The man who had pecks of gold was almost a demi-god!

'Ah! master,' said John, 'the women will come to-morrow!'

But as Rowlands stood by his bank door, faint with the thought of the danger he had so narrowly escaped, fate seemed again to want to try another fall with him. The Hen Doctor came swiftly up the street towards the bank. 'Ah, now,' thought Rowlands, 'he has taken fright; he must have his notes changed, and that will leave me without a coin.' But the doctor was pale, haggard, overcome by intense emotion.

'Evan Rowlands,' he cried, 'I've been robbed! My notes are gone: you'll pay me, won't you, in spite of that? You know you had my money. Come, Mr Rowlands, *bach*, do say you will.'

'Indeed, doctor, I'm sorry to hear of your loss,' said Rowlands, giving a great sigh of relief, however; 'but it's absurd to think I should give you gold for notes you haven't got. I can stop payment.'

'Stop payment!' shrieked the doctor; 'not till I've got my notes back.'

'Hold your tongue, silly fellow, and hear me out: I can stop payment of the notes, if you will tell me their numbers.'

'Numbers, *diaoul*! Numbers! what do I know about numbers? I want my money. Can I have it, if you please? I know how much it is exactly.'

'Doctor, you haven't a penny to your credit, as you know very well. I'll lend you a trifle, if you like, just to carry you on; and if you'll give me full particulars of your loss, I'll stop payment of the notes. More I can't do; so good-day to you, doctor.'

'I'll be revenged for this,' answered the doctor with a scowl as he hurried away.

CHANGED.

THE music of Spring's in the grove, Will;
The flowers are out in the dell;
And the pioneer bee exults, lad,
O'er the gleam of the cowslip's bell.
Far down by the murmuring brook, there,
The pure shining daffodils blow;
But the golden dreams are away, lad,
That were mine in that Spring long ago!

There is balm in the morning breeze, Will;
There is song in the morning skies;
And the rosy sunbeams kiss, lad,
The dew from the violets' eyes.
Far down in the depths of the pine-wood,
In the twilight the blackbirds sing;
But never the joy can they bring, lad,
That they gave in that golden Spring!

There are frisking lambs in the meads, Will;
There are bees on the bending flowers;
And the wild-dove coos to his mate, lad,
Mid the hush of the evening hours.
The lily dreams over the fount, Will,
And the sunbeam sleeps on the sea;
But the songs and the flowers of yore, lad,
Shall never come back to me!

There's a shadow across my path, Will,
In the midst of the gleam of Spring;
And the piping thrush on the thorn, lad,
Sings not as it used to sing.
And the lustre has gone from the stars, Will,
While they seem far away and cold;
They are not the same stars that looked down, lad,
Through those glorious nights of old!

There's a grave far down in the vale, Will,
By the side of the churchyard wall;
There often I sit all alone, lad,
Till the dews in the twilight fall;
And I gaze on the violets sweet, Will,
That watch her with tender eyes;
And I mingle my tears with the dews, lad,
As they fall from the far-off skies!

Here are the flowers she gave me, Will—
'Just withered violets,' you say;
But I'll ever keep fresh in my heart, lad,
That face who has passed away!
And when in that Garden we meet, Will,
Where the violets always blow,
She'll smile as I give her the flowers, lad,
That I got from her long ago!

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